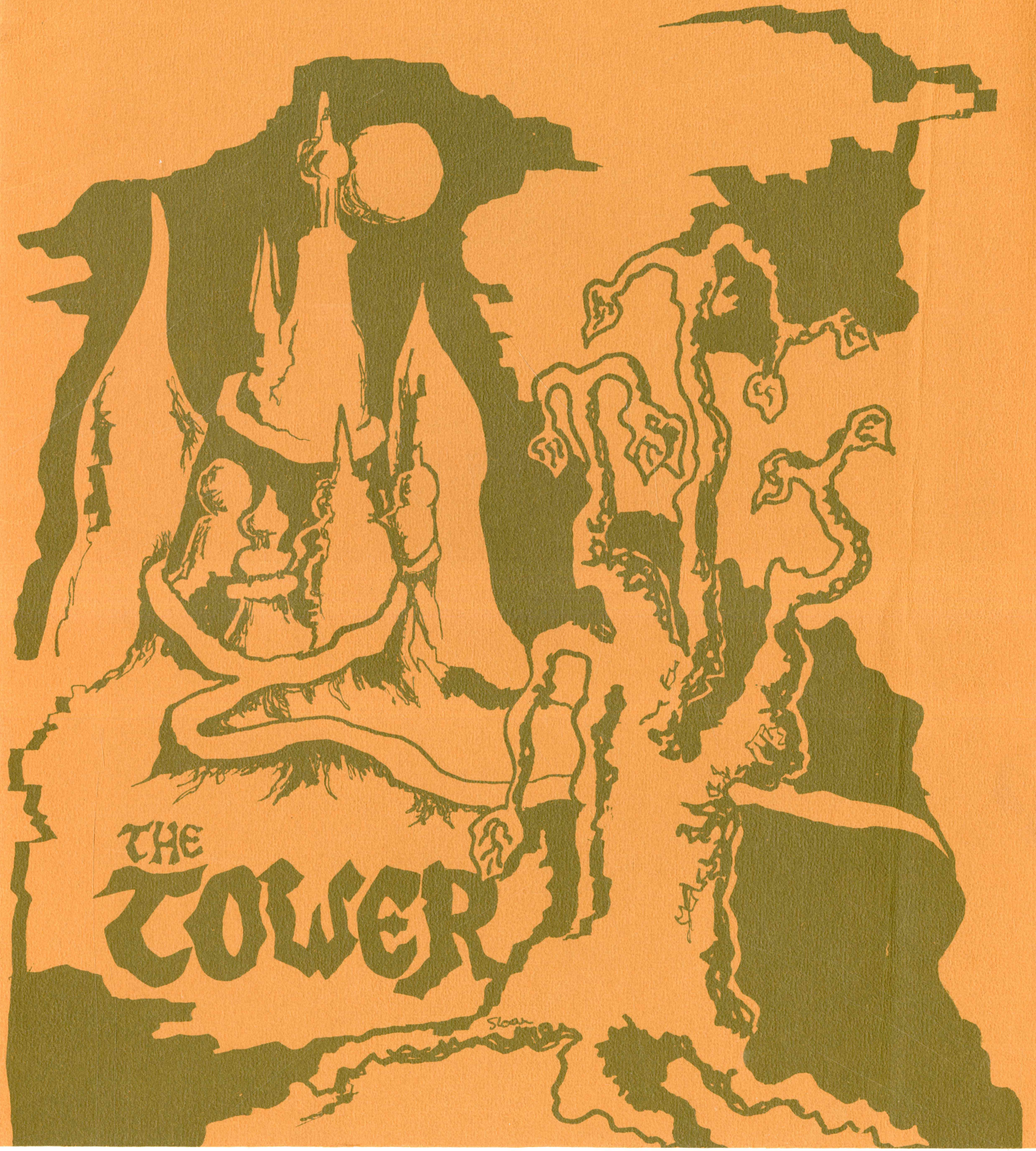
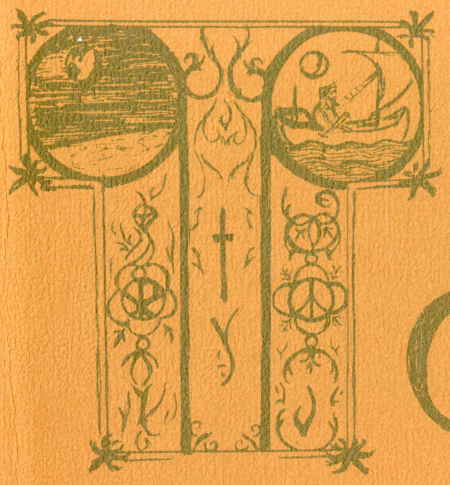
'70-'71





'70-'71 TOWER

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I am the Earth.
The work of the third day.
I am the stage, but not the play.

From my fertile crescent were born men,
Who spat in my face,
And violated my private places.
For forty days I washed myself of them.
And the moon made me pure again.

The men returned,
And increased in number til they need a God.
Then they crowned him with thorns
And left him to die.

I am the Earth.
Where men will be blessed or damned.
I am the altar, but not the Lamb.

Phil McEntee

The light shines into dark crevices
Illuminating caves of blackness
And buds open and nourish upon its
Life-giving essence.
Light filtering through cobwebs
Makes even these beautiful
By patterning stained glass windows
On the green-leafed canvas.
A glowing rainbow proclaims the promise
Of clear skies and calm seas
While the sun looks down and smiles
As the defeated darkness flees.

Brenda Thomas

CATCH THE GYPSIES

SUSAN DAVIDSON

With complete concentration Jody Carter watched two green flies dart around a drop of vanilla ice cream. It had dripped from little Johnny Andrews' ice cream cone as he had left Franklin's Drug Store. Jody looked up and tried counting the succession of small drops in the dusty street which led straight across to the Sadie Andrews Beauty Salon.

The glare of the sun was too much for him so he again divided his interest betwen the two green flies and watching people enter the drug store and return with ice cream cones. Business was good with the temperature easily above a hundred. Mostly the customers were from the courthouse on the square at the end of the street. And little Johnny Andrews.

Courthouse business was in the middle of its August lull and Mr. Dooley and his clerks didn't have much to do except send the girls over to Franklin's for ice cream every hour or so. Sadie Andrews was in her end-of-the-week rush at the salon so she didn't have much to do with little Johnny—except send him over to Franklin's every hour or so . . .

Franklin came out of his store wiping his shiney, bald head with a dingy handkerchief. He looked down at Jody. That boy was getting to be bad for business, spending every afternoon of the entire summer sitting in front of the drug store.

"It sure is a hot one today."

Jody's big eyes came up to Franklin's face but didn't utter a word. Those eyes of that boy! They always made Franklin feel uncomfortable. Was it because they were so large or that they were always so questioning that they gave the impression of knowing all?

"Too durn hot to be sitting out here today Jody. You better get on home and get your mamma to fix you something cold to drink. You're gonna have a sunstroke sure as I'm talking." Jody showed no intention of moving. "Why don't you go on over to the library for a while Jody? I reckon that's the coolest place in town."

Jody continued his silent stare and Franklin turned to re-enter his store. He stopped when he saw Brit Wells coming up the sidewalk. Perhaps he would talk Jody into going off somewhere.

"What you up to today Brit Wells?"

"Not much Mr. Franklin. Sure is hot out today. I been over talking to Mitch and he says there's some gypsies camping over on the north side of town."

"That so? 'Gypsies ain't worth nothin but stealing eggs. You stay clear of them. I'll tell you something else, you better stay clear of Mitch too. He's a good-for-nothin. Ought to be run out of this town."

"Mitch's okay. He can't help it he ain't got good sense." Brit quickly looked down at Jody. He wished he hadn't said that about good sense. Ole Jody might take it to mean him too. "Mitch met those gypsies when they was sittin' up their camp last night. He was going out there again this morning when I saw him. What you say we go out and see those gypsies Jody?"

"Now I mean you boys better not

be botherin them. First thing you know they'll be kidnapping you."

Brit laughed, "Aw, what would they do with us? Say Jody? Want to go?"

"Okay," Jody said with a shrug of his skinny shoulders, not really committing himself to anything. He stood up and Franklin watched the two boys saunter off.

There was sure a difference in those two boys. Same age he guessed, about seventh or eighth grade by now. That Brit was as sharp as nails, if there was anything happening you could find him right there in the middle. Jody was another matter. Franklin had a running debate going with J. T. Thomas, the Presbyterian preacher. J. T. was convinced Jody "wasn't all there—no better off than Mitch." But Franklin believed he was really like a child genius or something. Look at how he was always building something or other in his back yard—everything from paper airplanes to elaborate rabbit traps. He's smart all right. Just didn't like to socialize with people too much. Well, he sure hoped they didn't get into any trouble with those gypsies.

Brit and Jody didn't talk much on their way to the gypsy camp. When they were about a half mile out of town they viewed Mitch, the town idiot, rambling toward them, his lanky limbs dangling as he walked.

"There's ole Mitch. He must be done visiting with those gypsies."

As the boys approached they could hear Mitch singing some tuneless words to himself, "Goin' away, goin' away, goin' away, goin' . . ." When Mitch saw them his eyes seemed to brighten. "Hey there Jody. How you doin' today? Hey Brit. I been to see those gypsies again like I told you."

"Yeah Mitch. Jody and me are on our way out there ourselves. What you up to now?"

"I'm goin' to get me some fish up at the gravel pit." Mitch glanced at Jody and his dull face brightened more, "Hey Jody, you come on with me and we'll get a good mess of carpies for your mamma."

Brit quickly perceived the quiet enthusiasm in Jody's eyes. Although he didn't want to admit it, he wasn't about to go to any gypsy camp by himself. He knew Jody and ole Mitch were pretty thick sometimes. He'd have to change ole Mitch's mind about the fishing or even if Jody didn't go with him there was always the possibility he would run off anytime to be with Mitch.

"Aw Mitch, you know it's too hot to go fishin' today. Jody's got better sense 'n to sit in the sun for a few ole carpies."

Mitch's face fell. He looked up at the sun. "I reckon so. Mebbe I'll jest find me some cool place to sit."

"That's a real good idea, Mitch. Well, me and Jody got to be going."

As they started away Mitch called, "Where you goin'?"

"Up to the gypsie camp, Mitch." With that Mitch's face lit up and he ambled toward town, once again singing his senseless song.

Brit and Jody approached the gypsy camp, which was nothing more than one brightly painted wagon and three mealy-looking old mares grazing under some trees. Also under the trees sat a very ancient man and woman and a boy of about twenty.

As the two boys hesitatingly walked up to them the old people took no notice. Only the young man seemed to comprehend their presence. He stood up and smiled when they came nearer.

"Hey there!" Brit was the self appointed conversation starter.

"Hello. I am Leo Mann. This is my father and mother," neither of the two looked up and as if to excuse their indifference Leo added, "they do not speak the language."

"That so? This here is Jody Carter, he's sort of quiet. I'm Brit Wells. We heard about you people being here so we thought we'd walk over and get acquainted."

Leo motioned them away from the old ones and they all three sat on the ground a distance away.

"How did you hear we were here?"

"A fellow I know, Mitch's his name, was telling me this morning."

"Ah yes, I met him last night, he was here . . ."

"Mitch ain't really too bright is he?" Brit snickered, believing that to be the only way to excuse Mitch to strangers.

"I do not know what you mean by 'bright' but I enjoyed him very much. He is perhaps a person of outdoors rather than of people."

Both boys stared at the gypsy. Brit had never thought of Mitch as a woodsman, although he usually could be found hunting or fishing somewhere. The stare Jody focused on the gypsy with his wide, deep eyes was one of complete knowledge and understanding. The gypsy gazed into his eyes for an instant and immediately formed the impression that this boy would probably not be fooled by much. He would have to be careful in dealing with him. But the other . . .

"You say your name is Mann? That don't sound very gypsy-like to me. I would have thought it'd be something like Alfono."

Leo gave a slight laugh, "The name is an old German one. We have been in this country almost five years now."

"Been here five years and still traveling about? Why ain't you folks settled?"

For a second time the gypsy laughed. Here was a true innocent! "It is not the way of the gypsies to settle down. Our spirit must always be free. If we are held in one place for too long we begin to choke and smother. Then we must move on."

"Now that sounds good to me," Brit's eyes wore an eager expression. "You just travel all around, go wherever you want?"

"That is right. But times are becoming bad. I am alone with my father and mother and they are very old now. Without a large number we are very weak and it is very hard to make a way."

Brit's boy's mind was quickly going into action for which it was so well known. "How in the world do you get in with other people to make your groups strong?"

"Usually the gypsies travel in larger family groups than this anyway, but my father is in disgrace with the Gypsy King so we are forced to travel alone.

"That so? Was it something he did in the old country?" The term made Brit feel his conversation had more color. Properly impressed with himself he didn't wait for an answer, "Do you ever take in people besides your own kind—people who have that 'free spirit' anyway?"

The gypsy slyly smiled, but when he noticed Jody's eyes intently fixed upon him he quickly sobered and earnestly said, "It has been done on some occasions."

"Sometimes people who are truly tired of belonging to one place and long to be free and run with the wind have been allowed to join our camps."

Brit was becoming very enthusiastic, he rose to his knees, his face flush and red. "Do they have to be a certain age? I mean, me and Jody here—would you let us join up?"

"Well that would depend. How do I know you would not become homesick twenty miles from here and cause me trouble ten times more than the worth of your company?"

"Aw shucks, you don't know anything if you think that would happen. I even think I've got some gypsy blood in myself. What you say Leo?"

For the third time the gypsy gave his low laugh, "You are a quick mover my friend. But if I do take you along what could you add to the camp? No one can join empty. Each must bring something."

A black shadow passed over Brit's face. He looked quickly at Jody. No good there. Jody owned no more than himself. Then an inspiration hit him. Perhaps there was a way.

"How about money? Would you consider that worth something?"

The gypsy's eyes narrowed. "Perhaps. How much money do you have?"

"Well, I'm not sure right this minute. If we're back here by dark with say twenty, thirty dollars, would you take us?"

"We plan to leave here tonight when it is cooler. If you are here before we leave and have the money you can join our camp."

"Whoopee!" Brit bounded into the air. A real live traveling gypsy—himself! He pulled Jody up by the shoulders and began in the direction of town calling to Leo, "We'll be back here tonight, before you leave and with plenty of money. You just be ready to scoot!"

The gypsy watched them blend into the heat and then sat back down to wait for the coolness of evening. He could sure use some money. It would be simple dropping those boys off somewhere later. That other fellow, Mitch. He might have proved to be a different sort, might have been quite valuable. That kind of person always attracted the sympathy of old ladies. Yes, Leo decided he would have enjoyed traveling the country with Mitch for a while. His attention went back to the boys. He wondered why the one—Brit was it?—bothered with the small, quiet one. Probably needed him to help steal the money. The gypsy smiled.

On the way back to town Brit planned out the whole scheme. He sketched in the details to Jody. He was a little surprised. Jody didn't protest anything. Jody *was* smart, Brit knew that. Thus the plan must be pretty good, or Jody would never go through with it. If it hadn't been to his liking he simply would have left Brit at Main Street and walked on home wordlessly. But here they both were at Miss Ada's library and Jody not looking the least nervous. Brit marveled at his calmness. He was a strange guy, that was for sure.

"Good, it's all empty except for old Ada herself," Brit whispered as they entered the library. The cool dampness of the dark room only added to the feeling of excitement in the pit of Brit's stomach.

"Now you remember what I told you Jody. She keeps the money from the fines in the top right hand drawer of her desk."

The look Jody gave him—one a patient adult would give a worrisome child—served to ease Brit a bit. They walked up to Miss Ada's desk.

She peered at the two boys over her glasses. In all the world Miss Ada would be the easiest to steal from. Her whole world centered around her library. Any evil in the world did not exist for her. Thus, in her innocence she believed everyone else to be as impeccable.

"Well boys, come for an afternoon of reading, have you?"

"Yes'm. I wanted to tell you that while I was here yesterday I was in the baesment and came across some real old books about Africa. Well, I glanced through them and for some reason two or three are missing out of the collection."

"Ah, that's the Pricemire Collection you know. Jessie Pricemire donated them when her husband Sam died of a sun stroke twelve years ago. He had a real keen interest in Africa you know." She looked down at the boys. "I suppose you don't remember the Pricemires. They're a bit before your time now that I think of it."

"Yes'm. Well, those books that are missing are the ones I'm really most interested in."

"Missing you say? That's strange. Those books haven't been checked out since winter two years ago. Kenny Leyor was doing a report on Africa for his history class at the time."

"I sure am sorry those volumes I want aren't down there."

"Aren't down there? Of course they are. You just overlooked them. I suppose I'll have to go down and get them for you."

"Oh, thanks Miss Ada. I'll go down and help you carry them up."

Miss Ada and Brit walked toward the stairs. Jody waited until he could no longer hear Miss Ada rattling about the Pricemires and Africa. Then he slowly looked around the room. It was more dark than light, but content he was alone he walked to the other side of Miss Ada's desk and sat in her chair. The brown leather squeaked. Jody swiveled it around a few times. Then he brought his attention back to why he was there. He opened the right hand drawer. It was jumbled with various things. Some green and brown pill bottles, coated on the inside with a fine powder worn from the ancient pills inside, Jody pushed them aside. There was a box of chocolate covered cherries. Jody opened the box and the dark, chocolate smell seemed to float out. It was his favorite kind of candy. He quickly closed the box and rummaged through the drawer. In the back there was an old quart jar. A small slip of paper with its edges curling and worn was pasted on. Jody ran his hand across the crumpled paper and flattened it out. On it the word "FINES" was written in Miss Ada's shaky handwriting. He opened the jar and dumped its contents onto Miss Ada's desk. The only sound in the library was that of the crisp money as Jody counted it. Altogether there were thirty-eight dollars and sixty-eight cents. He folded all the bills together and put them into his pocket. He returned the coins to the jar and replaced it in Miss Ada's desk. Then he closed the drawer, stood up, replaced Miss Ada's chair and waited for Brit.

Brit's stomach felt as if it was falling apart. He couldn't keep Miss Ada any longer. They were going up the stairs. He hoped Jody had found the money. Brit was sure she kept it there, he had paid a fine himself only yesterday and had seen it then.

They entered the room and Brit looked at Jody. He looked completely the same, he gave no sign. Miss Ada filled the cards for Brit. He signed them. He felt as though he were choking. He looked at Jody again. His calmness was maddening!

Brit picked up the books and they walked out into the now cooling, late afternoon.

"Did you get it?"

Jody shook his head and they walked around to the alley in the back of the library.

"Oh boy! Let's see it. How much is there?" Suddenly Brit was aware of a third presence and he turned around. There was Mitch, his gawky frame leaning over them.

"I saw you two steal Miss Ada's money! You ought to be sick with shame."

"Be quiet Mitch. We ain't stealing nothing."

"Yes you are, I was sittin in Miss Ada's library trying to get cool and I saw everything you did."

Brit's stomach was really flying now. Ole Mitch would jabber it all over town if they weren't careful.

"Mitch, we're just borrowing this money from Miss Ada. We're planning on paying back every single cent. With interest maybe."

"Oh yeah?" Mitch's concern about the theft was dissolving into interest now.

"Yeah. You know them gypsies? Well, Leo, that's one of them, said me and Jody could go along with him if we could get some money. So you see Mitch, it ain't as if we're just stealing without a real good reason."

A complete change came over Mitch's face. He looked as though he were about to cry and then all of a sudden he was! He was lubbering just like a baby!

For once in his life Brit couldn't think of anything to say. The sight

of a grown man crying, strong or weak-minded, frightened him terribly. His stomach felt worse than it had in the library.

Jody's big eyes grew bigger and he asked quietly, "What are you crying for Mitch? What's the matter?"

"That gypsy feller said he was going to take *me* with him. But I ain't got no money and I can't get none."

"Hush Mitch," Jody said.

"It ain't fair! I want to go ten times more than you do. And besides, he ain't got no use for kids like you." Mitch's pathetic sobs continued.

"We know that Mitch," Jody said, still quietly, but with that air of perfect understanding of the entire situation. "We're going to give this money to you, Mitch, so you can be the one to go with the gypsies."

All these words from Jody had finally shocked Brit to his senses. "What are you talking about Jody Carter? This money's mine if it's anybody's. It was *my* idea!"

Mitch's sobs had subsided and his face took on the shining expectancy of a child promised a new toy.

Jody gave Brit a long, silent stare. It made Brit feel like such a child under it, that suddenly *he* was crying. He sat on the ground and covered his face.

Jody took the money from Brit's hand and said, "You know Brit, that gypsy didn't really want us. It was just the money."

Brit continued to cry. As he put the money into Mitch's hand Jody said, "Be careful Mitch, don't let that gypsy steal your money."

"I sure won't Jody. Listen, I'm going to make lots of money and send every bit back for Miss Ada."

"I know you will Mitch. Now you run like crazy and catch the gypsies."

BARRIERS

The blue sky,
Green water,
White sand—
Stretching into infinity
In three directions.
The fourth
(From which I'd come)
A limited world of prejudice,
Established customs,
Stronghold rules,
Inflexible thoughts.
I walked onward into the free wind.

Darlene Preskitt

AGAPE

August
Yellow leaks through
Stained windows spilling
Dawn across the holy hush of
Sabbath.

Barbara Sloan

ODE ON THE END OF SONG

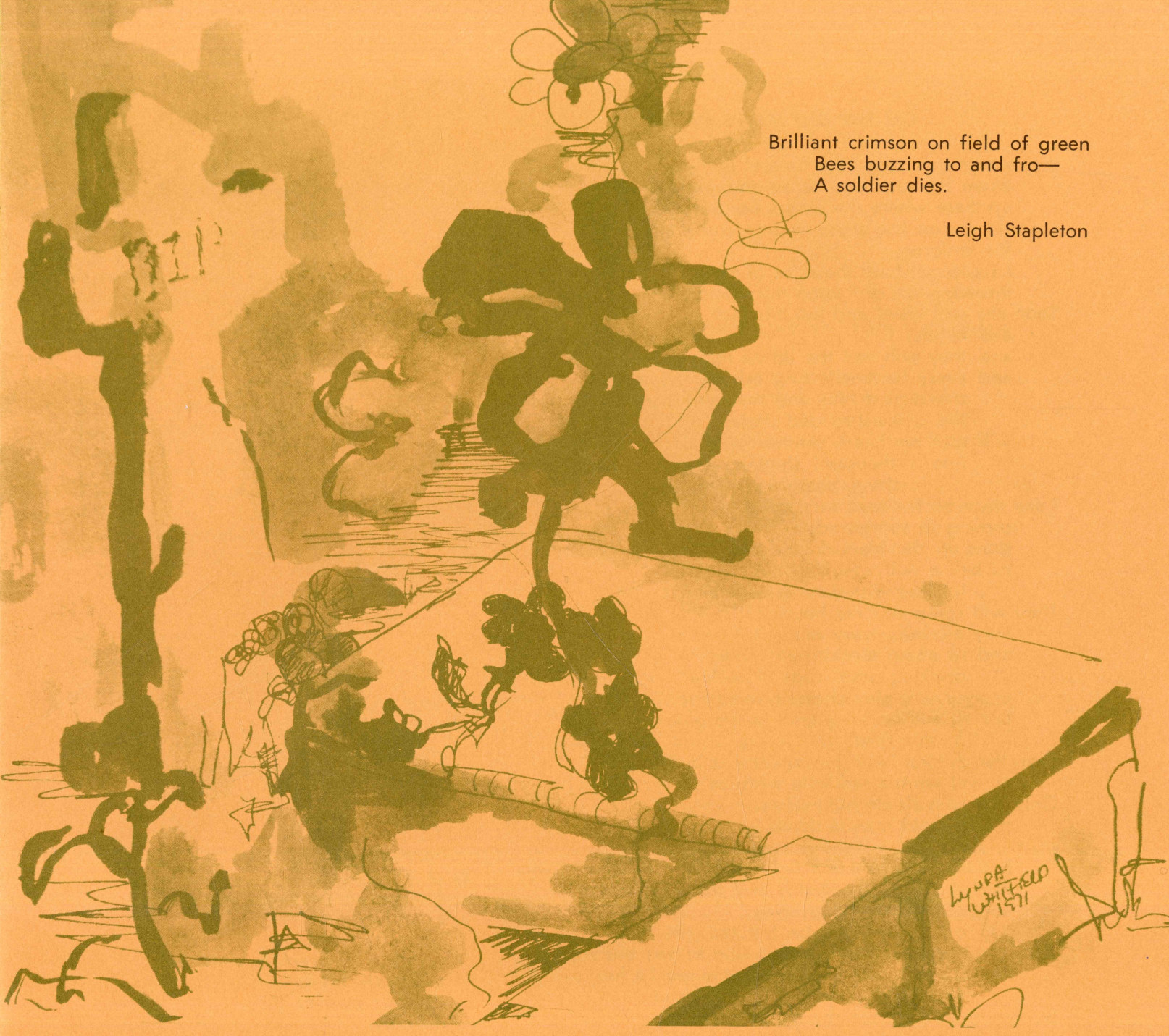
Thou art, if one, but few months gone, and yet
Seems centuries; then seems the second next
Just yesterday. My minde is vexed
With lonely voids in skyes of jet;
The sunne is southern gone:
Yet before, spilled on mee, as at the dawn,
Flushes, brilliance, that streake, as lovers yawn,
Across the virgin, dew-sprede morn. Gone now,
And I bide one, though oft I know not how.

Mine hoarde but little outward sacrement
Doth show of inward treasure buried deep:
A card or two, a leafe to keep,
Images, black and white and bent,
Chinese dog, books, and one
Mozart. Yet brightness warm, the light of sunne,
No more to life and meaning these will stun.
Gone now, though something true still hidden doth remain
That dust of time and tears of life cann't stain.

Thy temple lies in profanation here,
Thy pulpit smashed, no canon now is read.
My mind is hard to come by bread;
Without a master's feeding care,
It struggles hard to grow.
Without thee, same-signed edifier, so
I might have ever stranded been, kept low,
And drowned in seas of endless ignorance.
Gone now, but thou hath taught my minde to dance.

Without thy lyceum, my minde's slow feet
Might never rhythm learned to glide easy
'Cross ballroom floors of Poesy,
And Berliozan courts elite;
Might Faith have never grasped,
Had thy shepherding this frail minde o'erpassed,
Had thy enlightenment not doubts unclasped.
Thy words, thy living-passion hath mee won
And though thou'rt gone, their mission hath been done.

Barbara Sloan



Brilliant crimson on field of green
Bees buzzing to and fro—
A soldier dies.

Leigh Stapleton

WHAT IS DEATH?

A word or phrase
That speaks to no one
But answers us all.
An idea,
objective,
an abstract directive
That claims us,
frames us
With boxes,
and flowers,
and dirty grey marble.

William E. Crawford

FROM AN ENGLISH WINDOW

Branches,
Naked black, stand
Slashing the blood red sky.
Murdered day falls as the sun slinks
Away.

Barbara Sloan

ON THE OLD MAN'S DEATH

It is almost over now, the funeral is,
down the road and across the way,
up there where the others are buried.
I would not go but chose to stay and watch
the children;
I could not bear the sight of her
throwing the dirt upon my grandfather.
Soon she will kneel and kiss his face
and hands
and they will nail the lid on tight
and every hammer's ring echoing against
the distant hills and returning across
the white-shrouded moor
will split my heart, shatter my soul
into a thousand shining, jagged remembrances,
melting, shattered memories.
I see them on the road in single file,
coming in sad parade,
drawing the black-draped cart,
its bell a dully-clanking pedal-point
to their disbelieving shuffle.
They will come into the house,
they all will, every one,
and sit about the kitchen table
drinking great cups of coffee,
or they will play chess in the parlor,
but all will do so quietly in the gloom
of this time.
Even the children will play quietly at dolls
or will whittle sad little whistles.
Only the animals do not realize
that the old man is dead.
Up the stairs she will make as if sleeping,
but we shall hear the light steps and heavy drawers
as she gathers the watch and the silver dollars,
and with their giving away
our sorrow will be fulfilled, the cycle done.
They shall say (except his wife, who knows better),
The old man was good, and how sad he has gone,"
and they will count him as dead.
But we shall look into my children's eyes
and see him live.

Ricky Curry

murals

must be watched clos
ly or they will
escape like the seven sisters in
a twelve-timed sky.
the astronomer
with his hurricane eye sees
too much, his kalie
doscope puzzles the
memory.
like the oboe duet
in the third epi
sode. the following statement
of the theme foils all
attempt.
so must these
be appreciated minutely:
campaign speeches and fifth innings.
opera critics,
left-handed beginning pi
ano students, hummingbird wings
and victorian aunts.
total effect is mere
ly history. it tells very
little.

Phil McEntee

A WAR: A RELIVING; JUNE 5, '70

Grass in the sky
And flowers in the rain.
Few can sigh and cry
But none can feel the pain.
The bloody rivers flow,
Somewhere away from here;
The skies blast and glow,
And no one sheds a tear.

I remember younger days,
When life was a secret mystery.
Now all I see is new replays
Of shots from a declining history,
Colored with weeds and acid
But frayed with age and torn.
The mystery remains unsolved
Yet no more enchanting the earth—
The whole world is strangely occupied
With the killing not the birth.

FouFou Zabaneh

Stars were the fragments of glasses
Shattered by the celebrating gods
On the wine-stained floors of heaven.

Now they are the twinkling cigarettes
Of philosophers quietly smoking
In a darkened theater.

Harvey Estes

DECEMBER 30, 1969 / CRITIQUE

In the jungle all is still,
Dark as blood within the rill.
Nattie asks you, "How'd it feel?"
Dazed you answer, "Was it real?"

Sniffle, Snaffle, pug-nosed Grandchild,
All the answers come in couplets,
Then times two becomes quadruplets.
Drivel doubled, lost in free-style.

Now one voice alone is heard.
Dealer takes one is the word.
Nattie Rabbit draws a spade.
In the dark a trump is made.

Half of all that's real is false.
Half again is for the rhyme.
Words are added for the time.
In the mist, the moon is lost.

Nattie looks across the night,
"Deal moves from left to right."
"Out of order," I demand.
"Deal again and show your hand."

Slowly words become more plain,
You draw nearer to the flame.
Still the dark remains the same.
Little but the time has changed.

So he showed me how he dealt.
(In his hands the cards did melt.)
Suggested that I practice there,
I play only solitaire.

Now the climax is reached and past,
Maybe these lines will be last.
Still I need another brace,
Then will all be in its place.

Phil McEntee

THE OLD MAN UPSTAIRS

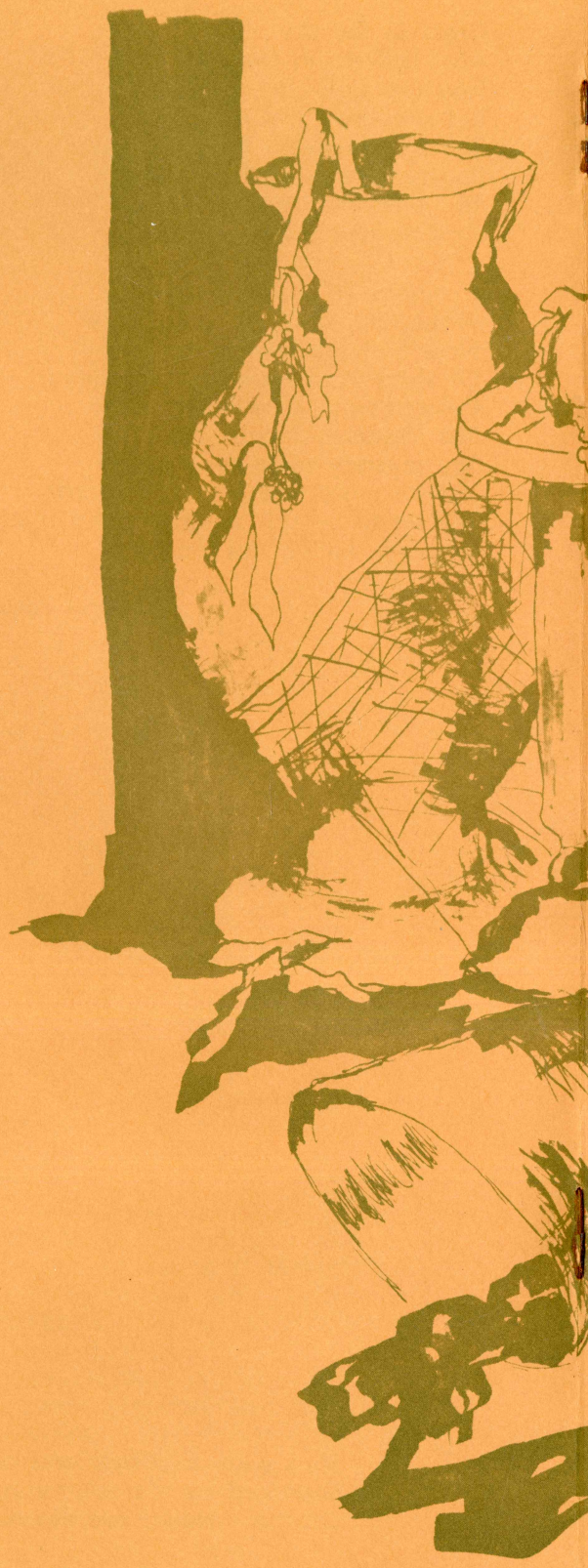
The old man who lives upstairs is our landlord.
This tenement he rents is his only world.
We never see him,
But his friends tell us what he wants.
They do not see him either;
He just sends messages.

He used to have some friends, a long time ago,
That he would see,
And he would talk to them,
But they are gone now.

The old man is upset.
His friends tell us we are ruining his place.
They warn us of his mood
But they are ignored.

O well,
Our lease expires soon
And we will settle up with him.
My worry is, that for all the trouble we have caused,
He may give us hell.

Frank R. Smith



A REFUSAL

I will not build a ship
From planks so soon to rot,
Though presently appearing
Strong basis for a boat.

I have seen ships before
From lumber such as this
That once set in the ocean,
Slow, soft, but surely sink.

I have heard of ships
Built of eternal lumber,
But I have never heard or seen
Anyone who rides upon them.
I believe it is a lie.

No, I will not build a ship
From planks so soon to rot.
I will not sally forth
Off the edge of Earth.

L. C. Robillard

The stars that march processioned through the night,
The silent beach of ordered grains of sand
Could be the workings of a Holy Light—
Or maybe just an ignorant hand.
The roads to paradise that prophets find
Could be the path worn by the ancient dead;
The songs of angel hosts that swell through my mind
Could be a madman raving in my head.
Even one who took bread in the Upper Room
And took the Word to every race
And died seeing the Master's face
May lie in an eternal, stone-sealed tomb.
Yet greater love shows no man than he trust
His God, though He return with him to dust.

Harvey Estes

Saturday at the Zoo

HARVEY ESTES

The shuolders of the road were littered with scraps of leaves and candy bar wrappers. The dull yellow lines down the center of the road were half obscured by the dirt that had settled in the sunken places on them. Mary counted them as they disappeared beneath the front of the car. She began to chant, "Follow the yellow brick road, follow the yellow brick road . . ."

John hugged her tightly to his side. "My little fairy princess," he whispered.

She snuggled up to him for a moment, then jumped up excitedly. "Won't it be fun to visit the zoo again? I remember when we were in the fourth grade and our class came here one day and we looked at the lions and the tigers and the bears . . ."

"Yeah," John laughed, "and I ate too many peanuts and got sick."

"It was fun," she sighed as she put her head on his shoulder.

They pulled up to the entrance. A brown, wrinkled old man in a white ice cream vendor's suit put his gnarled hand slowly up to the window. "Seventy-five cents each," he said.

John frowned. "Seventy-five cents? It used to be a quarter."

"Times have changed," the old man replied.

John paid the man and drove into the parking lot. "Well, we won't get to eat much of a lunch. The old man just about cleaned me out."

"Oh, that's all right." Mary put her arms around his neck. "I just really want to see the zoo again."

They got out of the car. The parking lot was wet and streaked with dull brown mud mixed with pine straw and tiny sticks. Mary laughed, "It looks like the pavement took a bath and forgot to use any soap. Oh, look! There's a clown selling balloons. Will you buy me a balloon? Please?"

"Sure, honey," John hugged her and strode up to the clown. On the edge of his white make-up there was a thin border of real skin that disappeared beneath his collar. The thin, straight lips scarcely seemed to move inside the huge, painted smile. "Thirty-five cents, buddy."

John took a quarter, a nickel and five pennies out of his pocket. Then he turned to Mary, smiling. "Here, sweetheart," he said, handing her the balloon. She took it and curtsied, "Why, thank you, sir."

As they walked on, John put his arm around her. "Listen, Mary. We have to start saving money if we're going to get married." He held up her hand and kissed the finger that she wore her engagement ring on.

"I know, honey, I know. We'll start saving more money." Then she grabbed his arm, "Say! Can we come to the zoo every weekend when we get married?"

John clasped her hand. "Sure, baby. We'll buy a house next door to the zoo."

"Can I have an elephant?"

"Well, we'll see."

Mary began to pout but was quickly pacified with some cotton candy.

They went into the bird house. In the main section was a simulated rain forest with tropical birds and plants. The walls were painted to match. As they stood in the dim sunlight that filtered through the mist, John kissed Mary on the ear and whispered, "I love you."

"I love you, too," she replied. "Wouldn't you like to be a bird all bright colored like that and live in the jungle where it's summer all the time and you never go to school and it's all green and warm and everything?"

"What if a tiger eats you up?"

"Oh, shut up," she said, somewhat playfully.

They strolled out of the building to the lake across the way. There they stopped and leaned on the fence as they gazed at the white swans placidly swimming in the quiet water. "Oh, Johnny, they're so pretty."

John was looking at Mary's reflection. He studied each feature, her pointed nose, her delicate neck, her short, black hair set on her head like a pixie's cap. The moss beneath the murky green waters wavered before his eyes beneath her image like the letters on the endless pages of his constitutional law book when he would fall asleep studying late at night to dream of her. White feathers floated across her reflection like snowflakes that never melt in frosted fairy kingdoms lost somewhere between the sunlight and the waves of a swan lake . . .

The beautiful face in the water suddenly became wrinkled. John's day-dream was a castle to itself, walling out all external perceptions. But in one corner of the castle echoed a loud screeching sound accompanied by a splash. John looked up. A little boy was shooting at the swans with a slingshot. John murmured, "The bastard."

"Now Johnny, he's just a little boy. He doesn't know any better."

John took out the pencil he always carried with him in his shirt pocket. He chewed on the eraser as he watched the little boy's mother take his slingshot away and shake her finger at him. He dropped the pencil. As he slowly knelt to pick it up he watched Mary's reflection disappear under the concrete that lined the shore of the lake. Through the fence he could see the swans swimming away behind the rocky, gray island in the lake.

John jumped to his feet. "Tell me you love me, Mary!" he pleaded.

She rubbed his nose with her finger. "I love you! I love you, silly boy!"

They walked toward the snak bar which was next to the miniature train that ran aound the park.

"Buy me a candy bar, Johnny."

"Sure."

Mary sat down at one of the tables while John went up to the counter. He bought two candy bars and a newspaper and then sat down with her facing the miniature train. She read the comic strip. John tried to concentrate on an article about the upcoming elections but couldn't. He put down the paper and unwrapped the candy bar. As he ate, he looked at the Micky Mouse figure on the engine of the train. It was colored red and yellow, faded like old comic books. He stared into the sun glare on the side of it. It reminded him of looking into the lens of a movie projector. You don't see the bright colored characters on the flat screen, only a gray, quietly moaning machine with one huge glaring eye that blinds you. The Micky Mouse continued to smile in spite of the pebbles that two kids were throwing at him.

Mary quickly finished the comics and said excitedly, "Oh, let's look at the monkeys!"

They walked up the hill on the rough pavement. The sun glared down on them. John's arm began to sweat where Mary's hand touched it. His stomach, empty except for the candy bar, had a hollow-sweet feeling.

When they got to the fence surrounding the monkey cages, it was locked. The rusted sign read, "Closed for repairs."

Mary said, "Oh, well, we'll look at something else."

Across the way a little boy squatting in a chocolate stained sun suit was crying. His ice cream had fallen to the ground. "Poor baby," Mary cooed.

"Yeah."

"Oh, Johnny, wouldn't it be fun to own a film studio in Hollywood that made nothing but cartoons for little kids?" She knelt to pick up a toy soldier she saw lying in the grass.

"What would you do after you got tired of the cartoons?"

"Excuse me, sweetheart, I didn't hear you. What did you say?"

"Nothing."

Clouds of today hide tomorrow's glee
    You think it is raining,
Only tears, cushion of reality;
Sun shines through raindrops
    The Devil's beating his wife.
                all her life
                all her life . . .

Leigh Stapleton

BIRMINGHAM

They came in the Spring, the same day the wild
Black starlings returned to Birmingham. The freeze
Was scarcely over. But April was quite mild,
Allowing the workers to turn up the sleeves
Of their denim shirts. By May the foundation was laid,
The first furnace finished. The rest of May
Was lost to rain. But now Summer quickened trade,
The steel mills were completed. Opening Day
Was October eleventh. Sousa playing bands
Led cheering parades, the mayor signed the first
Pig. Phallic chimnies violated lands
Of virgin-blue sky. Smoke-filled clouds burst.
The red-light sun sets early after noon.
Scarlet-eyed starlings limp about the ruin.

Phil McEntee

The geometrics of my thoughts
tumble like pick-up-sticks
from their neat simplicity
to a massive, confused complexion
without features—
sun-dried bones eroded and
eaten away by the changes
time has made within me.
their easy, simple security,
worst of all, is gone too.
Now I lie naked, alone
and without refuge,
my mental nakedness labors
to create a revolution in my mind.
My new thoughts are fetuses
feeding on the food
my consciousness provides.
I jostle, sort, collect and
reject them one by one.
Still they are lifeless bits
of windblown fluff
billowed and tossed incessantly,
without relent—
until I think my brain will explode
for wanting to touch those thoughts
and caress them into
meaningful shapes and colors.
Still I cannot command their mad energy
I am caught in a whirlpool
Of unbridled thought—
Thought without direction,
Direction without thought.

The crystal music
of 1,000 deep-throated harps of thought
swarms and blends in the heavens
of my mind—
for an instant of soaring ecstasy.
But all too soon my instant is over
as my thoughts begin to shiver
and tremble—
then they plummet and crash
to the earth-floor of my brain,
a bitter and forceful collision
of misguided notes—
Another wrong combination,
they come together to create
a distorted, meaningless consort of sound.
Down from close triumph
to hollow emptiness,
again.

Kathye Kerwan

As the sparkling stars grow faint,
The blessed mother slowly wakens.
Softly cooing are the pigeons
Near a single donkey, grey and wayworn,
Of this stable small and quaint.

Gently rising, the mother kisses
Her sleeping husband on the brow
And she smiles with the remembrances
Of the kingly visitors three; now
Trudging 'cross the mountain in their guises.

Singing to her babe, she plans
For years to come of happiness without doubt
And visions strange at last to be fulfilled.
Then trembling she reaches out
To grasp the child's nail-imprinted hands.

Fara Lynn Payne

THE PANTHEON

A round, dust-moted sunlight shaft descends
To halo placidly the still-serene
Faces of long-dead carven saints who dwell
In niches that once sheltered pagan gods.
Two thousand years ago . . . the dark comes down
Within my brain, and time wobbles, slips—fast
Regressing, falling back into the Past,
Caught in the race-memory vortex, I join
With those who built this Church of All the Gods.
Here, in this dark immensity of stone
And symbol, I may feel with them their pain,
Awe and dismay, terror and hope—and joy
At the caprices of these man-like gods
Who ruled the Universe eternally.
(The Builders knew no Twilight of the Gods—
Mercifully, they would not live to see
Their gods pulled down, replaced by other forms
Holier to us.) Yet have we served our God
And all his saints, so well, indeed, as to
Expect to keep them always in this Church?
May not some alien race come conquering
From some fierce world unknown to us as yet
And sweep us back before them—and decide
In interest of economy (as we
Did not destroy the temple , but replaced
Juno and Jove with Christopher and John)
To install in this place an alien god?
And like the Romans, we may never see
The day our gods vacate this worship-place
For if Man does not die, he shall regress—
A beast, a savage creeping-thing to prowl
Uncomprehending through the Pantheon
And glance once past the statues—and move on.

Kathie Farnell

As old men yellow-brown, time-tattered bend
Upon their knotty canes, the molded bones
Of winter-mildewed trees bow to the wind
Above cracked epitaths in frozen stone.

And yet the Easter breeze on funeral flowers
Breathes a new life; the earth, a split tomb
Gaping with furrows, is reborn the womb
That robes the lonely cross-like winter towers,

Though icy winds do their death song sing,
The chorus is always a hymn to Spring.

While jaded summer suns and flowers wane,
The trees with burden overripened bend
As new-tuned instruments in tension strain
Waiting for the fall overture of wind.

Harvey Estes

NO. 2

A whiff of summer breeze reaches me
Body on the concrete sizzling,
And my mind alive with wandering
Under trees
Over hills
Sliding over hot asphalt roads
Naked under a naked sun
Hot and greedy.
It continues on
In and around the market place
Stopping to greet a familiar face
Now half-forgotten,
Hid behind the veil of space,
Maneuvering around the tall minarets
And almost colliding with the prayer calls
At noon.
Stopping to embrace an old friend
Parent
Or some other wandering mind.
Stopping to enjoy a scene
Or pity one
To whom the war had been crueller
Than the rest.
The crowds move slowly on
Like crazy shadows on a crazy floor,
While my mind is still wandering,
Racing
And making a sudden turn
To me returns
Nostalgic and disturbed.

May 1970

FouFou Zabaneh

Bring me my staff
And we will walk together
On the slanted meadow
And catch the shadows of clouds
With our eyes
And toss them back and forth
Laughing our glowing wind.

In the open air
We'll watch the pines grow
In the horizon—collar
Of blue meeting the sky,
And laugh at the golden colt
Tossing his head, running
From his charging shadow.

We will sit under the
Bright shadow of the sun
And drink with our eyes
The clean wine
Of God's earth, and
Lying back on the soft sod,
Look into His blue eye.

Kathye Kerwan

Two children run on the beach. Coolness comes to meet them
Bringing soft floods of foam and sinking sand.
Naked bodies cloaked in threads of golden rays
Frolic in swells of green and clutch each other's hand.
Reality lies only in staying up on ever fleeting feet
And diving into rolling tunnels of hard wetness.
Laughter mixes with salt and freedom with the waves.
All cares float out to sea while joyful abandonment stays.

Tiny fingers pick up the ocean's myriad lives, gently searching each
For some glimpse of understanding.
Tiny hearts beat with awe at the wealth of nature's treasure
While curiosity goes on expanding.
Truth becomes a feeling and not a fact
While eternity is held in a moment of suspended time.
For these children born into a world of complicated strife
Have learned the reality of nature's simple life.

Brenda Thomas

Today,
Though the sun shined
For the ancient eyes of the young,
It is only a sparkle of sand
In the great hourglass.

Tonight,
The young eyes of the ancient
Watch dimmer suns,
Ice crystals of night
Cold but beautiful.

Eternity,
The infinite black curtain
Has few holes for light.
Thus, live for sun glimpses
And collected stars.

Harvey Estes